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Mission Review Guide

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Mission Review Guide for The Local Congregation

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The MISSION REVIEW GUIDE FOR THE LOCAL CONGREGATION was written by Lorne H. Walsh, Mission Consultant for Planning and Research, Presbytery of Chicago, in collaboration with G. Daniel Little, Robert S. Macfarlane, Jr., and Everett L. Perry of the General Department of Mission Strategy and Evangelism, Board of National Missions, United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

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Preface [1]

The Nature of Mission

GOD'S MISSION IN THE WORLD

In establishing an authentic style of evangelism by the recovery of biblical insight and the development of new approaches for our modern, technological society, the first question to raise is *not* "What is the mission of the church?" This is a secondary question, dependent upon the answer to a prior question: "What is God's mission in the world?" Only when we know what God is doing on earth can we know what we are called to do. Why is this so? Because the church is called to participate in God's mission in the world. What, then, is God's mission in the world? What is he doing which involves us and of which we are called to be witnesses?

There are many facets to the answer, but it can be summed up in terms of a cosmic vision nowhere better stated than in Ephesians. Here God is pictured as reuniting all things in Jesus Christ; breaking down the barriers that divide men from God, from one another, and from themselves; overcoming their dividedness; establishing salvation, peace, and wholeness (see Ephesians 1:9-10; 2:14-17). Notice that the unity which God creates is a cosmic one because his grand design is "to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth." It is a "new creation" which God's redemptive act has wrought. As Isaiah heard the Lord say, "Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"[2] This catches the dynamic character of God's action in history: Even now it is taking place in the world. God is acting to give us peace, but not of the kind which is often pictured when we talk of "peace of mind." God's peace is not absence of conflict, that ideal by which so many are guided today in avoiding places of risk and danger. It is no cult of comfort, caution, and craven fear. It is the peace of the Cross which gives wholeness, health, well-being. Salvation means the act of making whole. Remember the saying of Jesus, "Thy faith hath saved thee," which is repeated in the next breath in a different way: "Thy faith made thee whole." The two sayings are interchangeable, variant ways of saying what God is doing.

The Bible speaks of salvation in three tenses: past, present, and future. The gospel is the good news of God's redeeming work in Christ, who *has* reconciled us to himself. So it is possible for Jesus

[1]The preface is selected passages from *The Converted Church,* by Paul Stagg, The Judson Press, Valley Forge, 1967, pp. 58-70. Used by permission.

[2]Isaiah 43:19

to say to the woman anointing his feet, "Your faith *has saved you;* go in peace";[3] or to the woman with a chronic ailment who touched the border of his garment, "Daughter, . . . thy faith *hath made* thee whole, go in peace."[4] (Notice that some translations, for example the American Standard Version, say in a footnote that "made thee whole" may be translated "saved thee.")

But salvation is not something static, neatly packaged, already delivered to its recipient. Rather it is a dynamic thing, a *present* reality, the power of God in the midst of the world making for well-being, reconciling the world unto himself. The dynamic character of salvation as a present reality, a growing living thing is beautifully caught in Acts 2:47: "And the Lord added to their number day by day those *who were being saved."*

Other Scripture points to *future* salvation. We are to wear as a helmet "the *hope* of salvation."[5] We do not yet see what the full reality of salvation is, but "by God's power [we] are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."[6] The whole creation, indeed, waits in tiptoe expectancy "for the revealing of the sons of God" and, as the apostle Paul envisions it, "the creation itself *will be* set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God."[7] We live between the "already" and the "not yet," and we wait for the fulfillment of God's purpose when "every knee should bow, . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."[8]

In summary, God's mission on earth is to reconcile and reunite an estranged and broken world; to give new life to all whom pride and self-centeredness have numbed and killed; to bring release to the captives; to offer forgiveness to sinful debtors; and to accept the unacceptable. Incredibly good news!

OUR PART IN GOD'S MISSION

The new, indeed, has come. Jesus announced, "The kingdom of God is at hand." But the battle continues, the defeated powers still fight, and the kingdom is not yet fully manifest. In this time between the inauguration of the kingdom and the fulfillment, what is the role of the church?

The mission of the church is to participate in God's mission of reconciliation, to bear the good tidings of his deed by which man is restored, forgiven, accepted.

Perhaps the church "makes known" most surely not by manifesting in its own life the new creation, but by pointing to the new thing God is doing in the world, by seeing where the new is appearing,

[3]Luke 7:50
[4]Luke 8:48, *King James Version*
[5]I Thessalonians 5:8
[6]I Peter 1:5
[7]Romans 8:-19-25
[8]Philippians 2:10-11

often in unexpected places and surprising ways. The church must ever discern and be ready to say that "here and there in the world, God is acting." We discern his presence in the Freedom Movement for racial justice; in the antipoverty crusade of the nation; in the Peace Corps working among underdeveloped nations; in the new openness between men of all sorts, Christian and Jew, white and black, outsider and insider.

Wherever life is being renewed, healed, restored, reconciled, and made human, there God is at work.

THE CONTEXT OF THE MISSION

The context of the mission is the *world.* While Christians are enjoined not to be *of* the world, they are "sent" *into* the world, there to discern what God is doing. Like their Servant Lord, they are to identify with the world, be alert to its need, and be quick to serve it in appropriate ways.

If we are to serve the world and point to its Lord, then we must know what the world is like — its sights and smells; its anguish and expectation; its strategic points where decisions are made which shape our lives; the way it organizes its life either to divide or to heal, to cramp or to free, to depersonalize or to humanize. If we are to be faithful witnesses, we must be alert to the way our world is changing and discern in what way God is in the changing world. We need, also, to see whether the church is organized to engage the world and to penetrate its life; or whether its familiar organization, tied to the family and the residential zone, cuts it off from the public sphere.

Let it be clearly said that God has not abandoned the world, nor has he surrendered his rule over it to evil powers. If he had abandoned it, then the mission of the church would be rather simple: to make excursions from the safety of the church into the world to snatch souls as "brands from the burning," to extricate them from the world, and to bring them into the safe, sanitized sanctuary of the church. But if the truth is the opposite, if Christ is Lord over the world even though the world does not know its Lord, then the mission is quite different. It is to go, even as we are "sent," into the world to make disciples of the nations. And this is the situation which the Bible makes clear. God has "disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him [Christ]."[9] We have now to learn what it means to "disciple the nations," to live with the world responsibility, to make its life human, and in so doing to confess Jesus Christ as Lord.

With a new context in which to carry out its mission, the church must find new strategies of involvement in the world, new approaches

[9]Colossians 2:1-5

to the "nations" to which it is sent, more relevant ways to engage the world. There is need for pastors and lay people who have the insight and the courage to venture in listening to what God is saying to the churches through his Word and his world, and in finding ways to shape the life of the church around the needs of the world. Perhaps your church is — or can become — one which is not afraid to try, and which by its obedient discipleship may light the way for others. Happily, there are churches that are such hardy pioneers.

Chapter 1
Purpose and Possibilities

This guide is offered as an *initial means* of searching and raising questions. Its purpose is to provide a simple and brief process to describe the program of a congregation in light of its mission and to provide a way to think about that. Specifically this guide provides some means by which a congregation can:

A. *identify* those activities which are currently underway in the life and work of the congregation — both internal activities and those beyond the membership of the congregation — and describe how these activities are being done.

B. *determine* the understanding of mission implied by present program.

C. *suggest* general directions or specific next steps to be taken in order to fulfill the mission of the congregation.

The information and insights developed through the Mission Review may be helpful to a congregation in these situations:

(1) When the session requests a review of the congregation's program

(2) When the session chooses to review its program in order to determine the need for a complete "Exploration of Mission"

(3) When the congregation calls for a study to determine the possible need for additional facilities, staff, or other resources

(4) When presbytery requests that the congregation provide data, perhaps in relation to its use of the *Presbytery Exploration of Mission*

(5) When there is need to review mission relationships with other congregations, either denominationally or ecumenically

(6) When there is need to review relationships with institutions or groups within the community served by the congregation

(7) When the congregation searches for a new pastor.

Mission Review is a process which the session must authorize. As the ruling body of the congregation, the session also determines the purpose or purposes to which this guide will be put and how its findings and recommendations will be implemented.

This guide is not a substitute or short version of the *Guide to Exploration of Mission.* Rather, it is one of four guides prepared by the Board of National Missions of the United Presbyterian Church. The other three are:

How Does A Congregation Plan for Mission?, which presents highlights from a study of three planning techniques for local congregations. (Free from Presbyterian Distribution Service.)

The Guide to the Exploration of Mission in the Local Congregation, a process of searching for new directions in mission and achieving greater effectiveness. Many areas of the congregation's and community life are thoroughly explored. (Order from address on back cover. $1.70 each.)

Presbytery Exploration of Mission, a planning process for the entire presbytery. Many areas of the presbytery's and the community's life are explored.

CHAPTER 2
DON'T BOTHER UNLESS

Unless the session is willing to raise forthrightly the question of the understanding of mission implied in the existing program of the congregation, this review process will be of little value.

In order to make the review worthwhile, a congregation needs:

(1) the support of pastor and session and their endorsement

(2) a committee open to honest review of negative and positive factors in the life and work of the congregation

(3) a "climate" in the congregation which allows questions and constructive response to recommendations

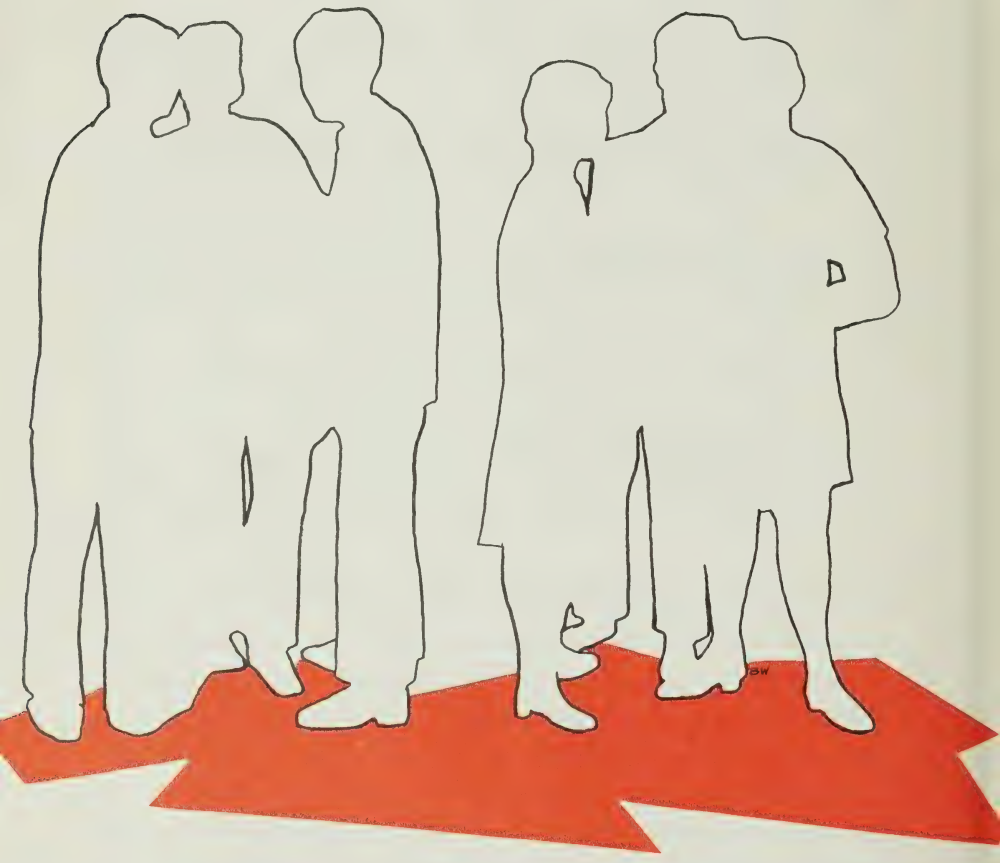
(4) a willingness to be informed by the findings of the review and a readiness to deal with its recommendations

(5) a time commitment of at least two months to complete the process

The session should assess its own congregation's situation to be sure these five needs can be met. If the decision is made to undertake a review, the next step is to assign responsibility for it. The session should appoint a Mission Review Committee from among the membership of the session and congregation and appoint its chairman. The choice of a chairman is crucial to the process, for he must lead the committee and the larger groups to develop full information and then later to find its implications.

Committee members should have wide knowledge of the membership and program of the congregation and should include a range of views on the current mission of the congregation. The preferred membership is six to eight persons.

This committee will be responsible to the session and will complete its task only when it has reported its findings and recommendations to the session. The session should inform the congregation that the review is being undertaken and what its purposes are.



CHAPTER 3
THE REVIEW PROCESS

The Mission Review is to be conducted in five meetings — with a possible sixth meeting if necessary to complete the report to session. The following schedule of meetings is recommended.

Meeting #1: The Task

At the first meeting of the Mission Review Committee one or more members of the session will present the task being assigned to it and will discuss the process to be used. A resource person from another congregation, or from presbytery or synod, might be present to explain the steps.

Interpreting the task and *planning the process* should include:

(1) statement of the task, as determined by the session

(2) review of process: general philosophy and specific procedures

(3) discussion of the meaning of the 3 questions which the Mission Review will seek to answer:

  (a) What understanding of mission does our present program suggest?

  (b) Is our current understanding of mission adequate?

  (c) Is our program effectively related to our mission? (these questions are repeated on page 22)

(4) determination of the timetable for the remaining four meetings

(5) selection of persons to be invited to Meeting #2, where an inventory of the program of the congrega-

tion will be developed and also to Meeting #4 (see paragraph under Meeting #2 describing persons to be invited)

(6) planning Meeting #2. Ordinarily the chairman of the Mission Review Committee will be the chairman of Meeting #2. He and the committee should go over "Suggestions to the Chairman on the Conduct of the Meeting" on page 14.

People to attend Meetings #2 and #4 may be selected by the organizations of the church themselves. This procedure will involve these groups and communicate that this process is underway. Additional persons, who have overall knowledge of the activities of the congregation, or who are widely involved in the community but not necessarily in "church" organizations, may also be invited.

Meeting #2: The Inventory

The purpose of this meeting is to involve church members in sharing information they have about the programs of the congregation. It is not intended that the local mission be evaluated, although all comments made by participants should be noted for consideration at a later date.

Persons invited should be those who can help discover what is being done by the congregation. Members of the congregation beyond the committee members will be needed. The total number should not exceed 15 persons. They should have wide knowledge of the life and work of the congregation and should be representative of various viewpoints and groups. In a larger congregation two or more group meetings may be needed.

Setting the environment for the meeting should receive some thought. Posters, picture displays, leaflets, booklets, etc., can be used to set a helpful atmosphere. Questions to be asked during the meeting can be written on posters and

hung around the room for easy reference during the meeting. An informal arrangement of chairs and refreshments will help.

Gathering and recording information is the heart of Meeting #2, and Meeting #2 is the heart of the Mission Review. It provides *all the input* for the other steps. It is important that the *fullest possible information* be gathered. It is also important that it be displayed in several categories so that it will assist others to contribute in light of the total overview that will begin to emerge before them. These aspects of recording merit consideration:

(1) Display — An easel with tear-off sheets or several blackboards will be needed to record the information visually before the group so that it can be read by the entire group. An additional easel or blackboard should be available to record comments or concerns which are not part of the description of the program but which deserve attention at a later date.

(2) Categories — Organizing information in categories is a useful way to help the committee and others understand the *overall* meaning of the data, rather than merely focus on particular parts. A number of different categories can be used. The following seem pertinent:

(a) worship
(b) service to members
(c) service to the community
(d) ecumenical relations

(3) Interaction — The gathering of information is cumulative. One piece of information will suggest another. Each person in the group should feel free to add additional comments and activities.

Suggestions to the Chairman on the Conduct of the Meeting

Of greatest importance is that the person chairing the meeting *be aware of the possible contribution of each person attending.* Persons will be asked for information which will describe in some detail the program of the congregation. Participants may also wish to express feelings, concerns, problems, and hopes. The chairman needs to be open and flexible about these. Assurance should be given that they will receive attention at a later date.

The chairman needs to appoint two recorders: one for information on activities and one for comments and suggestions.

Since our basic purpose is to gather and order information about the program of the congregation, the chairman may open the meeting by indicating:

(1) why we are doing this mission review
(2) what has preceded this meeting
(3) why this group was invited to this meeting

ACT

Groups	Worship (1)	Service to Members
Deacons	monthly service to hospital	- Fellowship (to shutins) - Flowers for worship

(4) what we are going to do here
(5) how this inventory will be used
(6) what else the group will be asked to do in Meeting #4

A Method for Gathering and Ordering Program Information

It is suggested that a chart be used perhaps like the one shown below.

The chairman will ask someone to lead off and describe a group in which he is involved. The chairman should make it clear that a church "group" is normally a formal organization sponsored by the congregation. However, it can also mean an informal group created by members of the congregation or an activity of a single person, if that person has been delegated to the task by the session. Information on all formal and informal groups and activities should be recorded.

The Deacons Board might be mentioned first. It would be listed in the "Group" column in a chart like this:

I T I E S

(3) ruice to ommunity	(4) Ecumenical Relations	How many Persons take Part?	Approximate Budget
monthly ruce in ospital ollege holarships fund· articipa- n in bytery dy on mmunity sues.	- monthly service in hospital - cooperation with Council of Churches	9	$1,000.00

The chairman will follow up with questions to bring out further information. Such questions might include:

What are the activities of the deacons? (Each activity would be recorded under the appropriate column of the chart.)

Would anyone like to add to this list of activities of the deacons?

Has this group made any specific decisions to change any of its current activities?

Are any non-church people members of the deacons?

How many persons take part in the work of the deacons?

What finances do the deacons have for their work? (In these last two questions use aproximate answers so as not to pause too long.)

Questions asked about each activity would be somewhat the same, although there can be no rigid formula applied.

Occasionally the chairman may need to ask under which category a particular activity belongs. It may belong under several. As between "service to members" and "service to community," it should be placed according to its primary purpose. For example, a Circle of Women's Association may include several non-church members. Yet if its primary purpose is the nurture and education of church members, most of its activities will probably belong under "service to members."

The chairman may find it useful to observe that "worship" can be conducted in a number of different ways and places. Services to members may be located in the church building but may also be conducted in homes or other locations. The "community" may mean the local neighborhood or may extend to an entire area (such as a metropolitan community) or even to a foreign country. Ecumenical relations may be on an interdenominational or an interfaith basis.

Once the activities of each group are fully described and recorded for all to see, the chairman will ask the meeting to move on to the activities of other groups. Next should come groups which may in some way be related to the first. In this way similar groups are described together.

The chairman will make it clear to the group that the information gathered at this meeting makes the entire review possible. Participants will be invited back for Meeting #4 to hear a report of findings and share in thinking through implications.

The chairman may sense when the meeting is ready to come to a close or may suggest that an adjournment time be set and work towards that goal.

Meeting #3: Implications of the Inventory

The Mission Review Committee will meet to study all the information gathered in Meeting #2. Be sure you have a complete list of all the programs and activities described. The committee should discuss the list with the following questions in mind: (The committee should try to find a number of answers to each question. The answers should be written down. Questions 2, 3, 4 are most important and most difficult. Examples of how answers might look are given on page 20 (a), (b) and (c).)

(1) What information appears to have been omitted? (It should be added.)

(2) What does this congregation seem to think is its business as suggested by the list of what we are doing?

(3) What goals seem to underlie what was described?

(4) What understanding of our mission does our program reveal? (From the programs described in Meeting #2 how would a stranger understand the mission of this congregation?)

(5) What strengths were revealed in the congregation's local mission? Why are they strengths?
What inadequacies were revealed in the congregation's local mission? Why are they weaknesses?

(6) What new possibilities for local mission emerged?

(7) How are our strengths and weaknesses revealed in the ways we use our resources? (Personnel and finances.)

(8) What need for new information from outside the congregation was revealed?

(9) What presbytery relationships were revealed?

(10) What ecumenical relationships were revealed?

The discussion in this meeting is for the purpose of developing an interpretation of the congregation's activities. Dif-

ferent opinions will be expressed in the committee in this meeting, and in the larger group in Meeting #4. The committee's findings will be most helpful if the report includes the major differing interpretations which emerge.

The purpose of the Mission Review is not to develop a full-scale evaluation, though of necessity evaluative judgments will be involved. The committee may feel part way through the Mission Review that the session should authorize a full-scale evaluation, perhaps using the *Guide to Exploration of Mission in the Local Congregation.* It is much better for the committee to recommend this than to act as if it has the ability to write an authoritative statement as this time.

After the Mission Review Committee has concluded its discussions of the information gathered in Meeting #2, it will put its findings into a summary report. These findings will be presented to Meeting #4. Such a report should be

organized into major categories based on the questions above. The *final* report of the Mission Review Committee (Meeting #5) will develop out of the findings developed here. Therefore, this part of the work should be carefully done. Two or three members of the committee may need to draft the findings at this point into a coherent report.

Findings based on the ten questions above might be phrased something like this:

"The Mission Review Committee has carefully studied the information gathered in our meeting two weeks ago. If we seek to understand this congregation from what was described there, we would conclude the following:

(a) Apparently we believe *our business* to be our own fellowship and maintenance. We come to this finding because approximately 80% of everything described is directed to and participated in by our members exclusively.

The only exceptions to this were the community service projects begun last fall by the deacons. Thus there is also a secondary but active concern for . . .

(b) Our *basic goal* appears to be the nurture of a worshipping and studying fellowship. This judgment is based on the fact that our Sunday program of worship and Christian Education occupies so much of our attention and energy.

Other goals are these . . .

(c) The *understanding of our mission* which underlies our congregation's life and activity appears to be this: It is our mission to provide for this community a program of high quality teaching and preaching and to share in the support of the world mission of the church."

The report should go on to cover other points.

Meeting #4: Comparing Perspectives

The Mission Review Committee will invite the same persons who attended Meeting #2 to participate in this meeting. The purpose of this meeting is *not* to gather more information about the program of the congregation. It is to *share* the committee's reflections, findings, and questions.

The agenda for this meeting should . . .

(1) review the information accumulated in Meeting #2 and check for completeness

(2) present the findings and implications developed in Meeting #3 (these findings and implications should be written on large sheets of paper for discussion by the whole group)

(3) seek the corrective of wider discussion.

As in Meeting #2, good records of the discussion will be needed. As the discussion progresses, major reactions and points can be recorded on large sheets of paper or on blackboards.

Meeting #5: Preparing a Report to Session

The Mission Review Committee is responsible to prepare a report of its findings and recommendations for the session. A draft may be prepared in advance of Meeting #5 by one or two persons appointed by the chairman. This last meeting is for the purpose of reviewing this draft and making any adjustments for a final report.

Chapter 4 of this guide outlines the nature and content of the report to be prepared for the session.

Chapter 4
Preparation of the Report to the Session

The final step of the Mission Review is to take the findings and recommendations arrived at in Meeting #3 as corrected in Meeting #4 — and prepare a report to the session. The basic questions which need to be answered in this report are:

(1) What understanding of mission does our present program suggest?

(2) Is our current understanding of mission adequate?

(3) Is our program effectively related to our mission?

Answers to the questions of an adequate understanding of mission and an effective program are *not* based on a full-scale evaluation process (such as occurs in the use of the *Exploration of Mission)*, but are based on insight gained in answering the questions raised in Meeting #3. It is assumed that the committee will take into account resources for mission, mission needs, opportunities for mission, as well as actual program.

There are several ways of answering the questions raised above. The following general options are possible:

Option 1 — The Mission Review Committee may *affirm* both the present understanding of mission *and* the program used to implement this mission.

Option 2 — The Mission Review Committee may *affirm* the present understanding of mission *but recommend* that the design or performance of program needs to be upgraded, changed, or redirected.

Option 3 — The Mission Review Committee may report that the *present program is effective* but the *understanding of mission is weak.*

Option 4 — The Mission Review Committee may find it necessary to report that the present *understanding of mission is inadequate* and that the *quality of program needs improvement.*

Option 1 is primarily one of commendation but should be chosen only with the understanding that it is always possible for mission to become even more effective with changing circumstances and resources.

Options 2, 3, and 4 suggest that consideration be given to

one or more of the following kinds of recommendations, selected on the basis of the review and clarified by subsequent discussion:

(1) Recommend to session that a Statement of Mission (purpose) be drafted and that mission priorities and future programming be done in light of this Statement of Mission.

(2) Recommend that the session hold meetings within the congregation to involve the membership in a discussion of purpose and program.

(3) Recommend to session that a thorough study be made of the mission of the congregation. (The Exploration of Mission process is available for such a study with consultative resources being provided by the presbytery or the synod.)

(4) Recommend to the session changes or additions in the program of the congregation.

(5) Recommend that a committee be authorized by the session to conduct further study of specific areas of program.

(6) Recommend to session that existing program committees evaluate and consider revision of program in light of the findings and recommendations of this review.

(7) Recommend to session that the Mission Review findings be communicated widely to the congregation, presbytery, and synod.

With the submission of this report the work of the Mission Review Committee will be completed, except as individual members may continue to provide insight or assistance to the session or any other committees or groups within the congregation.

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